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THE CONCEPTION OF THE SOUL AND THE BELIEF IN RESURRECTION AMONG THE EGYPTIANS.

WHEN students of comparative religion began to collect their data of the several faiths of primitive peoples, they were astonished to find that a belief in the immortality of the soul was all but universal; and there are many scholars who look upon this unanimity as a proof that the idea is inborn in man and that this *consensus gentium*, so called, is a strong argument in favor of its truth.

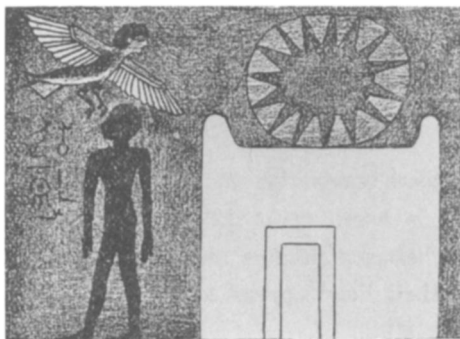
There is a good reason for the prevalence of the belief in immortality, and it is based upon the fact that primitive peoples do not discriminate between dreams and reality. Dreams are real to them, and so if their dead appear to them in dreams, they believe them to be living still.

We must, however, modify our statement, lest we be misunderstood. To say "Savages *believe* in immortality," is, closely considered, wrong. It is not a "belief" with them, not a religious doctrine, nor even a conviction of any moral tenor. To them it is simply a fact of immediate experience.

Savage psychology has been studied in several parts of the globe, and the similarity of its essential features among the different tribes of all continents is remarkable. Indeed, if we consider the logic of primitive man in face of the facts which confront him, we have to understand that to his unsophisticated mind the dead are actually present when they appear in dreams. Savages do not philosophize on the subject, nor do they formulate a *credo*. They see the dead in dreams and visions; they hear their voices; they

converse with them; they consult with them. To question their existence would be as ridiculous to them as to doubt their own being or the actuality of material bodies. What to later generations changes to belief is to them knowledge. Doubt is a creation of incipient civilization, when ideas begin to be "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought."

We know of no time when the Egyptians did not believe in immortality, and we may assume that the aborigines as well as the Punt invaders had both some notions of the fate of the soul after death. Their ideas must have been hazy, for in different districts different notions seem to have prevailed, many of which survive in later historical documents. The result is that while all the Egyptians may fairly well be said to have believed in an immortality of



THE KHAIBIT AND THE BA.*

some kind, there are different views, and it is obvious that they have never been systematized into one consistent formula of the Egyptian faith.

We may enumerate many different conceptions of souls, all of which play an important part in the Egyptian religion, and yet we are not informed whether the Egyptians believed in all of them at once, or whether some of them are different names for the same or approximately the same thing, or finally whether we have sometimes to deal with heretical opinions.

The probability is that in some districts the soul was regarded

* From Naville, *Das Thebanische Todtenbuch*, I, plate CIV. — Maspero, *Dawn of Civilization*, p. 108.

as a shadow image, an unsubstantial and idealized shape of the body; in others it was thought to be a bird, a hawk or a phoenix. Later on, it became a human-headed hawk, a mysterious being with wings. Again, it was regarded as a spiritual essence, man's energy and will-power, obviously the product of philosophical reflection. Those who had a vague idea of the significance of the heart-beat looked upon the heart as the seat of the soul, and hence, as the organ of consciousness. All in all, we have no less than nine con-



THE DEAD MAN AND HIS SOUL, THE BA, ON THE GOOD CG'W HATHOR.*

ceptions of the soul, which occur side by side in the same papyri of the great books of Egypt, among which the Book of the Dead is the most important one.

This mysterious work, the Book of the Dead, is a collection of prayers or incantations, which the soul must recite on its journey to the other world. The name has been given it by modern Egyptologists, because the several chapters of it have been discovered

* From Leemans, *Monuments Egyptiens*, I, III, pl. XII; Maspero, *Dawn of Civilization*, p. 187.

in sarcophagi wrapt up with the dead, but the title is, to say the least, highly inappropriate. The best Egyptian name for it would be, as Budge proposes to translate it, "The Coming Forth by Day," meaning thereby that the soul, in its passage through the underworld, will rise again with renewed life, as the sun, after having set in the West, comes forth again in all his glory in the East. In brief, these prayers are intended for the protection of the soul, and if we had to modernize the name, we ought to call it the "Book of Resurrection."

* * *

The prehistoric inhabitants of Egypt buried their dead in crouched positions with knees drawn up to their faces, on mats



THE SARCOPHAGUS OF THE SCRIBE RA.*

The soul (*ba*) is visiting the body and lays its hands upon the heart of the mummy.

or gazelle skins. There are instances in which the bodies were mutilated, with heads severed from the trunks, and in some cases there are indications of a religious cannibalism. This means that parts of the flesh had been removed for the purpose of being eaten, presumably by the heirs in order to symbolize the transference of the soul of the deceased upon his descendants.

The historical Egyptians, who may have been an entirely new

* From a photograph by Emil Brugsch-Bey. Maspero, *Dawn of Civilization*, p. 199.

race (probably a mixture of the descendants of the Punt invaders with the aborigines), developed a definite system of preserving the bodies by embalming. The reason for this practice must have lain in the belief that the fate of the soul after death depended mainly



OSIRIS ON THE FUNERAL COUCH.*

While Anubis prepares the mummy, the soul holds to its nostrils the scepter and the wind-filled sail, the former symbolizing the power of renewal, the latter the breath of life.

on the preservation of the body, and the idea of the significance of the body in connection with the belief in a resurrection has been pre-

* From Rossellini, *Monumenti Civili*, pl. CXXIV, 2; Maspero, *Dawn of Civilization*, p. 179.

served through the history of Egypt. Indeed it has survived in the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh and is still incorporated in the confession of faith which is recited each Sunday from every orthodox altar, Protestant as well as Greek and Roman Catholic, although actual belief in it is rapidly fading from progressive Christendom.

The ideals that underly the Christian conception of Christ the Saviour, are not foreign to the ancient Egyptians, but the part which Christ plays in Christianity is there ascribed to several deities. First of all he is typified in the god Osiris who, too, had to die after



THE SOUL VISITING THE MUMMY.
(From the Papyrus of Ani.)

he had lived on earth as a man and like unto any other man. Having died, he was embalmed and guided through the under-world by his brother-god Anubis. Anubis accordingly played in this respect the part of Christ not only for Osiris, but for all the dead of Egypt, and we know that among the early Christian Copts, Christ was frequently identified with Anubis. He was the Greek Hermes, who is called by Homer *psychopompos*, leader of souls.

The idea of the soul visiting the body was dear to the Egyptian, for it is represented again and again in papyri, on wall frescoes, and illuminated sarcophagi. The soul's visit to the mummy must

have meant a temporary resuscitation of the dead person, and it was for his benefit that libations and sacrificial meals were offered at the tombs.

* * *

No doubt the Egyptian soul-conception is typically Egyptian. We do not find it in the same shape anywhere else on the surface of the globe. Nevertheless, it is also typically human, and sums up in a matured and cultured form the soul-conception of savage life as it is known to us in Africa, Oceania, North America, and in stray historical records of the primitive people of Europe and Asia.

In spite of the typical peculiarities which confront us in the Egyptian monuments, Egyptian life and Egyptian religion form a



THE MUMMY AT THE TOMB PROTECTED BY ANUBIS.

(From Wiedemann's *Religion of the Ancient Egyptians*.)

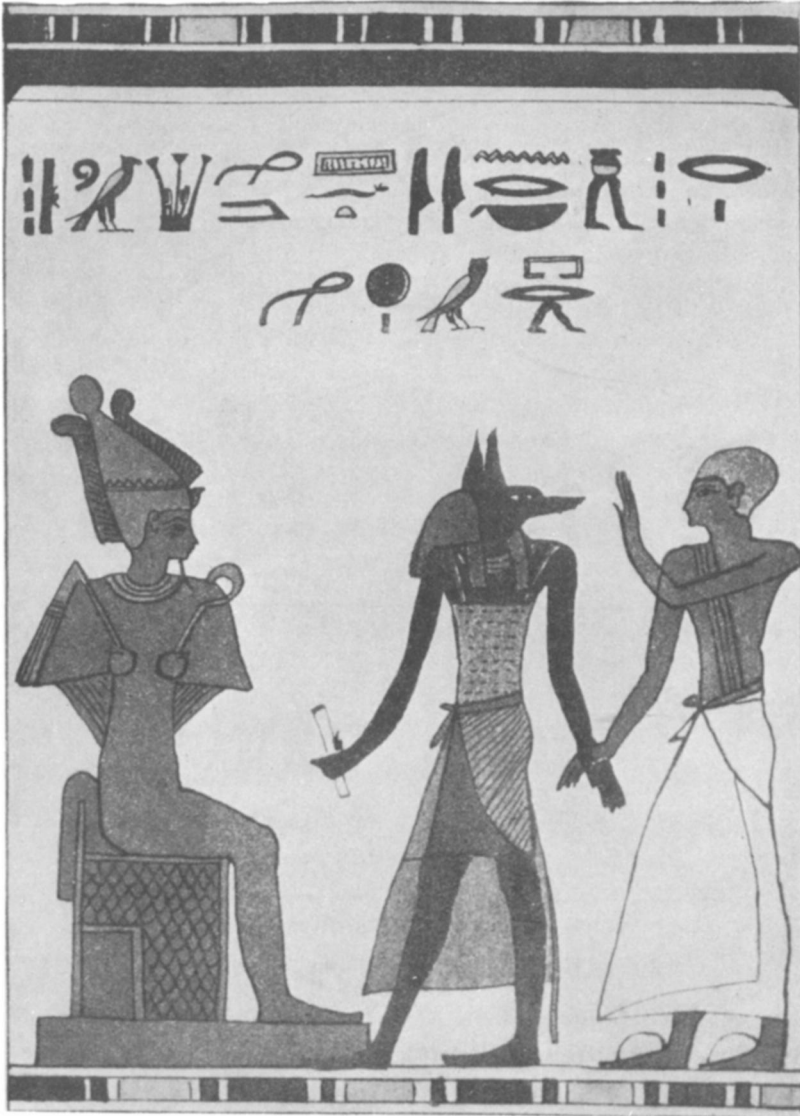
definite phase characteristic of a certain stage in the development of mankind. The ingredients which do not go back to the aboriginal inhabitants are partly Lybian, partly Abyssinian, partly Punt Arabic, partly Canaanitish, and a mixture of all these elements with a few incidental ingredients from other countries: Assyria, Phoenicia, and Greece; but the general result is decidedly human, and that is the reason why it still attracts and fascinates us. Moreover, Egyptian views have entered into the life of our present civilization, and in this sense the Egyptians are as much our spiritual ancestors as are the Greeks and the Israelites.

Professor Budge in his recent work on *The Gods of the Egypt-*

tians, characterizes the situation in the Preface (pp. xiv-xvi) as follows:

"The cult of Osiris, the dead man deified, and the earliest forms of his worship, were, no doubt, wholly of African origin; these are certainly the oldest elements in the religion of the Dynastic Period, and the most persistent, for Osiris maintained his position as the god and judge of the dead from the Predynastic to the Ptolomaic Period. The Followers of Horus, who brought a solar religion with them into Egypt from the East, never succeeded in dislodging Osiris from his exalted position, and his cult survived undiminished notwithstanding the powerful influence which the priests of Rā, and the worshipers of Amen, and the votaries of Aten respectively exercised throughout the country. The heaven of Osiris was believed to exist in a place where the fields were fertile and well stocked with cattle, and where meat and drink were abundant; the abodes of the blessed were thought to be constructed after the model of the comfortable Egyptian homesteads in which they had lived during life, and the ordinary Egyptian hoped to live in one of these with his wives and parents. On the other hand, the followers of Rā, the sun-god, believed in a heaven of a more spiritual character, and their great hope was to occupy a seat in the boat of the god, and, arrayed in light, to travel whithersoever he went. They wished to become bright and shining spirits, and to live upon the celestial meat and drink upon which he lived; as he was so they hoped to be in every respect. The materialistic heaven of Osiris appealed to the masses of Egypt, and the heaven where Rā lived to the priests of Rā and other solar gods, and to royal and aristocratic families, and to the members of the foreign section of the community who were of Eastern origin.

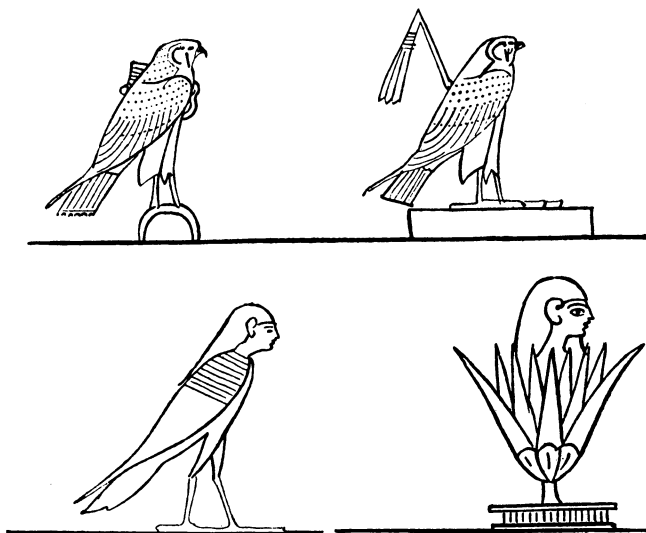
The various waves of religious thought and feeling, which swept over Egypt during the five thousand years of her history which are known to us, did not seriously disturb the cult of Osiris, for it held out to the people hopes of resurrection and immortality of a character which no other form of religion could give. Secure in these hopes the people regarded the various changes and developments of religious ideas in their country with equanimity and modifications in the public worship of the gods, provided that the religious fasts and processions were not interrupted, moved them but little. Kings and priests from time to time made attempts to absorb the cult of Osiris into religious systems of a solar character, but they failed, and Osiris, the man-god, always triumphed, and at the last, when his cult disappeared before the religion of the Man Christ, the Egyptians who embraced Christianity found that the moral system of the old cult and that of the new religion were so similar, and the promises of resurrection and immortality in each so much alike, that they transferred their allegiance from Osiris to Jesus of Nazareth without



ANUBIS USHERING THE DEAD INTO THE PRESENCE OF OSIRIS.
(After a colored facsimile of a picture in the *Book of the Dead*, by Pleyte.)

difficulty. Moreover, Isis and the child Horus were straightway identified with Mary the Virgin and her Son, and in the apocryphal literature of the first centuries which followed the evangelization of Egypt, several of the legends about Isis and her sorrowful wanderings were made to center round the Mother of Christ. Certain of the attributes of the sister goddesses of Isis were also ascribed to her, and, like the Goddess Neith of Saïs, she was declared to possess perpetual virginity. Certain of the Egyptian Christian Fathers gave to the Virgin the title "Theotokos," or "Mother of God," forgetting, apparently, that it was an exact translation of *neter mut*, a very old and common title of Isis."

The body of man was called *khat*¹, and was represented in hieroglyphics by a dead fish and a perfume bottle, indicating in



FOUR REPRESENTATIONS OF THE SOUL.

(From Lenormant's *Histoire de l'Orient*, III, 269.)

their combination putrid odor. It was also written in a fuller form,² which means something subject to decay that can be preserved by mummification. The hope of the Egyptians for immortality being closely affiliated to the idea of the restitution of the body, they were bent on preserving its form, which gradually led to the practice of mummification.





The tomb was built to be the residence of the mummy for all time to come, and was hence called "the eternal house," *pa t'etta*; and we must assume that there, at appointed seasons, comparable to our All Souls' Day, memorial services were held with libations, food-offering, and incense-burning.³



KING THUTMOSIS II ACCOMPANIED
BY HIS DOUBLE.*



A ROYAL INFANT AND HIS
DOUBLE.†

*The priest is called *ker heb*  which signifies one who conducts the festivals at the tomb  *pa t'etta*, the everlasting house.

*The king belongs to the XVIIIth dynasty; his double carries on his head the king's *ka*-name. (From Arundale-Bonomi-Birch, *Gallery of Antiquities from the Br. M.*, pl. 31. Maspero, *Dawn of Civilization*, p. 261.)

†This bas-relief in the temple of Luxor represents the birth of Amen-oths III. From a photograph by Gayet; Maspero, *Dawn of Civilization*, 259.

The soul is represented in many ways, either as a bird,⁴ or as a hawk,⁵ or, most commonly, as a human-headed hawk,⁶ called *ba*.

The *ba* represents mainly the functions of consciousness and is supposed to visit the tomb from time to time, and enter into the *khat*, the perishable body. In fact, the purpose of the *khat*'s mummification is simply to make it possible for the soul to enter again into its body.

Another conception of the soul is the idealized shadow of a man, called "the shade," which in hieroglyphics is called *khaibit*.⁷

A typical Egyptian view of the soul is a description of the sentiment that throbs in our breast—that part of the body that lies between the arms and finds a vivid expression in the use of our hands. It is called *ka* and is pictured in hieroglyphics by two outstretched arms,⁸ which is commonly translated "double," for it is supposed to be the ethereal shape of the man and represents the personality as a kind of astral body, which is supposed to be in possession of all attributes of the man to whom it belongs. The translation "double" is in so far justified as the monuments actually represent the *ka* as a second and an additional figure, which, at certain times and certain places, is deemed necessary to add to the representation of a man. We see, for instance, the picture of a new-born prince in which his double, his idealized self, is represented right behind him, bearing a special name, the so-called *ka*-name of the future king.⁹

The conscience of the man, the organ of his moral life, is supposed to have its seat in the heart, hence *ab*, the heart, is the name of the soul in a similar sense as even to-day we would use the word heart. It is written in hieroglyphics in two ways.¹⁰

The spirit of a man is called *khu*, represented as an ibis,¹¹ the emblem of Thoth, the scribe of the gods, the mediator between

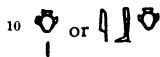


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Coptic KUD

⁹ The *ka*-name is indicated by resting on the hieroglyph *ka* and having on top the hawk of Hor.



or



man and the celestials, the protector of science and the divine incarnation of the Word, the Logos—a conception which plays an important part in Egyptian theology.

Another way of representing the soul is as the vital force, called *sekhem*, represented in hieroglyphics by a symbol that seems to be a fan, representing breath, vitality, and energy.¹²

Finally, the personality of man is covered by all that appertains to his name, and thus it is represented in Egyptian by the hieroglyph *ren*,¹³ which means “name.”

The body when mummified is called *sahu*¹⁴ and is pictured as



RECEIVING THE BREATH OF LIFE.*

THE DEAD MAN AND HIS SOUL.†

an upright mummy.¹⁵ When the deceased has been justified before the judgment throne of Osiris, and when his heart has been returned to him, he is regarded as having received the benediction of truth and becomes *maa-kheru*,¹⁶ a word which finds an equivalent in the German *selig*, and is translated in English, “triumphant,”



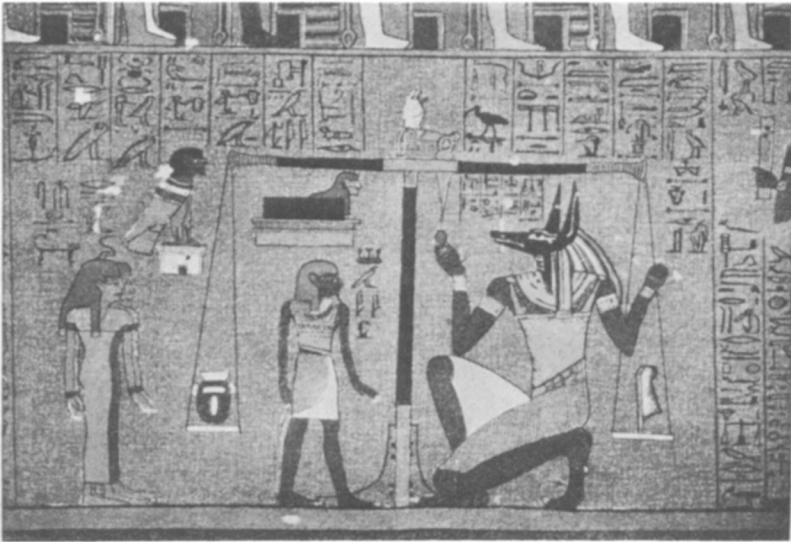
* From Naville, *Das Aegyptische Todtenbuch*, I, pl. LXIX. Maspero, *Dawn of Civilization*, p. 217.

† From Guieyresse-Lefébure, *Le Papyrus de Soutimès*, pl. VII.—Maspero, *Dawn of Civilization*, p. 183.

"justified," "victorious," or "sainted." When the body has been sainted, it is supposed to be in possession of a spiritual body; it becomes luminous and is possessed of an incorruptible *sahu*, a transfigured body.

Man's resurrection soul is characterized by the bird *bennu*,¹⁷ the Egyptian phoenix.

The idea of resurrection has always been the main doctrine of the religious life of Egypt. Here all longings find their satis-



WEIGHING THE HEART.

Anubis adjusts the tongue of the balance the construction of which is noteworthy. A feather, the emblem of truth, serves him for a weight. (From the Papyrus of Ani.)

faction, here all interests converge, and here all hopes are centered. When a mummy is removed in a boat to its eternal resting-place, a near relation of the deceased stands in the bow of the boat and calls to the helmsman:

"Steer to the West, to the land of the justified.

The women of the boat weep much, very much.

In peace, in peace to the West, thou blessed one, go in peace!

.....

When time has become eternity then shall we see thee again.

For, behold, thou goest away to that country in which all are equal."¹⁸

* * *

All the amulets which were worn by the living or were placed upon the mummy to accompany the dead to the other world, are intended to serve the purpose of insuring a happy resurrection on the day when time will become eternity.

The most common symbols used are the *ankh*,¹⁹ called also the "key of life," or *crux ansata* (the handle cross), or the Egyptian cross. It means "life" and is seen in the hands of the gods as an emblem of their divinity.

Another symbol is the *tet* or *ded*,²⁰ the backbone of Osiris, a symbol of stability.

A third symbol is the scepter *usr*,²¹ meaning "strength," having on top a hook not unlike the head of the oryx (an animal sacred to Set) and ending below in a horse-shoe form.

Still another symbol is the feather²² of truth worn by the goddess Maat on her head. It means "purity," "faithfulness," and "justification."

The vulture,²³ representing "Mother Isis," was placed on the neck of the mummy on the day of the funeral.

The *uræus* (snake),²⁴ like the vulture, is a symbol of Isis, the two being sometimes combined. The former represents Upper Egypt and is frequently painted with outstretched wings as hovering over the king; the latter received particular veneration in the Delta. Both were also worshiped as special goddesses, the vulture under the name Nekhbit, the *uræus* (snake) under the name Uazit.

The buckle or tie, called *thet*,²⁵ is one of the commonest amulets found in the graves. It is commonly made of red jasper, cornelian, porphyry, red glass, red faience, or sycamore wood; and we are

¹⁸ Ermann, *Life in Ancient Egypt*, chapter on "The Dead," pp. 320-321.



told that the red color represents the blood of Isis. It is placed on the neck of the dead.

The symbol *nefer*,²⁶ originally representing the heart with the trachea, but later on interpreted as a lute, means beauty, gladness, joy, and good luck. It is frequently trebled so as to mean "thrice blest."

The symbolical eye, *utat*, made of glazed faience, wood, granite, haematite, cornelian, lapis lazuli, or precious metals, is shaped either as the right²⁷ or the left²⁸ eye or both in combination. . Sometimes the right eye is called the sun and the left eye the moon; and in other passages the former is explained as the eye of Hor in the south, meaning the sun in day-time, and the left eye, the eye of Hor in the north, meaning the moon during the night. The eyes of Hor are endangered by Set but are known to be always victorious. Frequently they bear the inscription *usa*, i.e., "prosperous" or "hale," and the souls of the dead were believed to be safe under their protection.

In the Book of the Dead, the *utats*, the eyes of Hor, are painted with wings and human legs.

The crook *hek*²⁹ signifies the care that the gods take of mortals, and its use continues in the Christian Church as an emblem of episcopal responsibility.

Other symbols representing royalty are the white crown of the south, *het*,³⁰ the red crown of the north, *tesher*,³¹ and the double crown³² of both Upper and Lower Egypt, called in later times *pschent*.

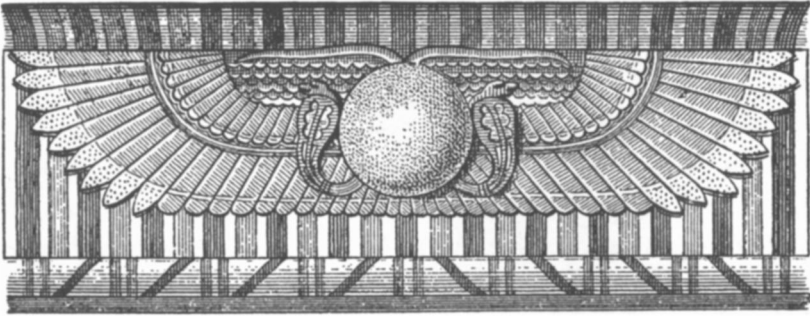
The scarab, *kheper*,³³ the Egyptian dung-beetle (*ateuchus sacer*) was considered with special awe, and it meant generation or regeneration, transformation, resurrection, self-creative power, and immortal life.

The Egyptians had observed the scarab roll a little mud ball and hide it in a safe place. In due time the young beetles came out of this mysterious ball, and it was assumed that the scarab had no sex, but that it possessed the power of regenerating itself.



The heart, *ab*,³⁴ is also considered as an important amulet, and Mr. Budge quotes one instance in which a heart amulet bears, on one side, the inscription of the name of the goddess Neit, a picture of the bird *Bennu*, and the legend *Nuk ba Khepara*, that is, "I am the soul of life eternal"; and, on the other side, the chapter on "The Heart" quoted from the Book of the Dead.

We must mention also the symbol *hefnu*, which means "a myriad" and is represented as a frog,³⁵ being the emblem of the goddess Hekt, a form of Hathor, wife of the god Khnemu. Hekt also was believed to have a favorable influence upon man's resurrection. Even as late as in the Hellenistic period, and still in the Roman period of Egyptian history, we find frogs on lamps, and in



THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS WITH HEALING IN HIS WINGS.

one instance the frog bears the inscription in Greek, "I am the resurrection."³⁶

An enumeration of Egyptian symbols would not be complete without finally mentioning the emblem of the winged disk, which appears over every temple entrance in Egypt. There is a legend about its introduction, which relates that Râ Harmakhis, "the Ever-living Sun-god," was confronted with the enemies of the gods of the Egyptians, and his son, Hor Behudti, "Hor as a sparrow hawk," struck terror among the host of Set, by assuming the overawing form of a winged disk.

³⁴ 

³⁵ 

³⁶ ΕΓΩ ΕΙΜΙ ΑΝΑΚΤΑΚΙΣ.

Thoth, the scribe of the gods, says:

"The darter of rays who came forth from Râ, he conquered the enemies in his form [of a winged sun-disk]; from this day he shall be called the Darter of Rays who emergeth from the horizon.'

"Hamarkhis spake unto Thoth:

"Set this sun at every place at which I tarry, at the places of the gods in the South Land, at the places of the gods in the North Land, [at the places of the gods] in the Underworld, that it may banish evil from their vicinity.'

"Thoth set this form at every spot, at every place, how many soever there were, at which any gods or goddesses might be. And this is the winged sun-disk which is over the sanctuaries of all the gods and goddesses in Egypt, for their sanctuary is also that of Horbehûdti."³⁷

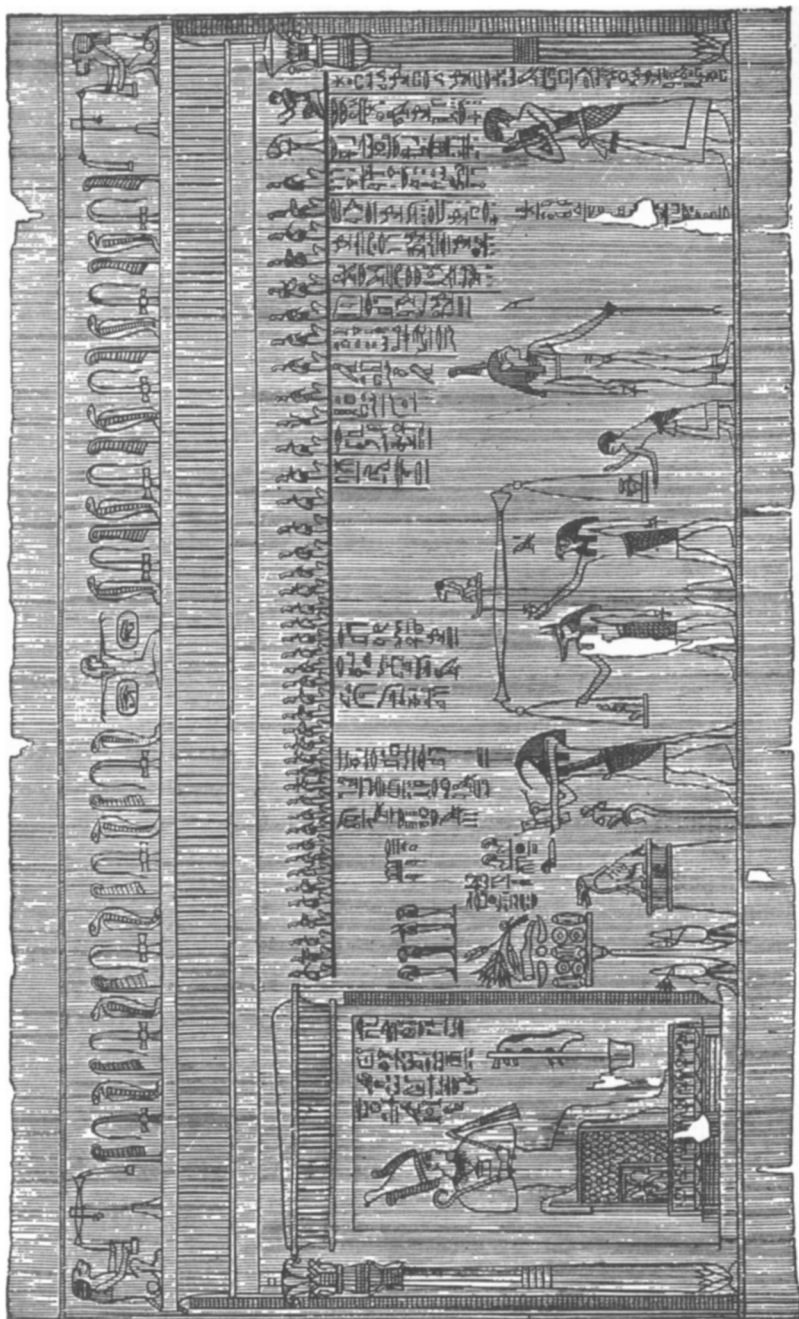
The winged disk, accordingly, as related in this legend, "banishes evil from the temples." It is the emblem of rescue from enemies and of salvation. The same emblem is used in other Oriental countries, in Arabia, Phœnicia, Syria, and especially in Babylonia, and we must assume that even the Israelites had no objection to it. At any rate, we find an allusion to it in the prophet Malachi (iv. 2), who apparently refers to this emblem of the deity, when he speaks of Yahveh as the "Sun of righteousness...with healing in his wings."

* * *

A prominent feature was the effect which the belief in immortality had on Egyptian morals. The soul could pass easily in its migrations through the shadows of the under-world if it had not committed any offense against either the gods or its fellow beings. It had to know the magic spells that were required to overcome the powers of darkness, and when finally it reached the hall of truth, the heart of the deceased was weighed in the balance with truth, which is represented pictorially by a feather.

The deceased makes a negative confession to forty-two judges of the sins which he has abstained from committing, and we quote

³⁷ Alfred Wiedemann, *Religion of the Ancient Egyptians*, p. 74.



THE HALL OF TRUTH.

the following examples from the Papyrus of Nu (Budge, *Egyptian Ideas of the Future Life*, pp. 130-134) :

"I have not done iniquity.—I have not committed theft.—I have not made light the bushel.—I have not acted deceitfully.—I have not uttered falsehood.—I have not uttered vile words.—I have not eaten my heart (i. e. lost my temper and become angry).—I have not pried into matters to make mischief.—I have not set my mouth in motion against any man.—I have not polluted myself.—I have not made any man to be afraid.—I have not made myself deaf unto the words of right and truth.—I have not made another person to weep.—I have not behaved with insolence.—I have not increased my wealth except by means of such things as are mine own possessions."

By his justification he becomes identified with Osiris who now lives in him as a power of salvation. We quote from the Papyrus of Ani (*Book of the Dead*, Vol. I, p. 29, Chicago, The Open Court Publishing Co.), where Horus, the son of Isis, the avenger of his father Osiris, and the saviour of mankind, addresses Osiris Un-nefer:

"I have come to thee, O Un-nefer, and I have brought unto thee the Osiris Ani. His heart is [found] righteous, and it hath come forth from the balance; it hath not sinned against any god or any goddess. Thoth hath weighed it according to the decree pronounced unto him by the company of the gods; and it is most true and righteous. Grant that cakes and ale may be given unto him, and let him appear in the presence of the god Osiris; and let him be like unto the followers of Horus for ever and for ever."

Such in main outline are the leading facts in the Egyptian conception of the soul and its life after death, and closely considered they are but the natural outcome of those views which can be observed in all the prehistoric nations of the world; but in the case of Egypt they are reduced to a clear conception, symbolized by appropriate emblems, stated in religious doctrines, systematically applied to practical life in the shape of moral maxims, and pictured graphically in religious art.

EDITOR.